

KANSAS CITY TIMES (MO)

4 February 1984

Only best need apply for CIA's intriguing jobs

By Howard Goodman
A Member of the Staff

The file on James C. Smith: A gray-suit kind of guy. Nice grin underneath a gray mustache. Good handshake.

An American type. Corporate. Clean briefcase.

A company man, versed in the virtues of company life. "It's very, very challenging work," Mr. Smith said. "If you're looking for notoriety, however, it's not for you."

The company is The Company. Mr. Smith recruits for the Central Intelligence Agency. He took his briefcase to a windowless room at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and interviewed students for careers ranging from computer operator to economist — to spying.

"We've got some covert jobs and some overt," Mr. Smith said.

That's about all he ventured on the subject of job availability. Secrets are his samples case.

He refused to disclose his age. He brushed aside talk about his background. He didn't want his picture taken. He did say that he was once deputy chief of the CIA's recruitment division and now works out of Golden, Colo. "Let's say," he offered with a little smile, "I've had many years of experience with the agency."

He swore that Mr. Smith is his real name.

His appraisal of CIA careers: "Rewarding — if you're into self-satisfaction." Meaning that applicants should not expect much in the way of public acclaim for their contributions to the commonweal. These are jobs, he hinted, that even a mother shouldn't know too much about.

Getting one was an attractive prospect at the UMKC campus, where 28 students signed up for Wednesday and Thursday interviews with Mr. Smith. That made the CIA as popular a prospective employer, college officials said,

as such Kansas City area heavyweights as Hallmark Cards Inc., United Telecommunications Inc., Commerce Bank, Black & Veatch Consulting Engineers and Macy's.

Last year, Mr. Smith said, the CIA received "250,000 pieces of correspondence inquiring about jobs," and at UMKC the agency drew as little outward attention as the only other on-campus recruiter working at the time: the Olathe School District.

There wasn't a picket sign or protester in sight. Don Carr, the university's director of placement, said that in four years of CIA recruiting he has heard not a grumble of discontent over the on-campus presence of

an agency that used to be roundly accused of toppling governments, smuggling heroin, spying on Americans at home, making curious alliances with Howard Hughes and the Mafia, and otherwise playing the Ugly American around the world.

"UMKC is not a Berkeley," Mr. Carr said. "It's not even a KU as far as the type of students here."

"Ours aren't political, for the most part," he added. "They're here to get an education, and then most of them want to get a job. I'd say 98 percent of them do."

A first-year law student named Joe said he was attracted to CIA work because "it's stable work and you get to travel."

Joe's last name, like the names of other students in this story, is withheld at the request of Mr. Smith. The recruiter said that any student named in a news story probably would lose his chance for a job. The CIA, he said, can't risk hiring someone whose name has been in a newspaper.

Joe said: "I know a lot of kids in the law school, from Marxist-Leninists to ultraconservatives, and I think everyone considers the CIA, like the FBI and Secret Service, as fairly professional organizations."

Joe, who has a speech communications degree and whose minor was in political science, said he had "no personal problems" with seeking CIA work, although he knows another law student who said he'd hate to undergo an intense political background check.

"I don't think I've got any big skeletons in my closet," Joe said.

Mr. Smith began rattling Joe's closet right away, asking questions about drug use and other personal habits. "He wanted to know about frequency and types — mild hallucinogens, severe hallucinogens," Joe said.

Michael, a political science major, got the impression from his interview that without an advanced degree in foreign studies he was underqualified.

"I don't have any moral qualms about CIA work," said Michael, who described himself as a Ronald Reagan conservative. "It's about all

you can do with a political science degree, outside of teaching. And I'd like to have some input into policy."

Mr. Smith said that an unspecified number of jobs were available in each of the CIA's directorates: science and technology, intelligence, administration and operations. That meant opportunities for students with majors ranging from English to electrical engineering, he said, provided their grades were good, they demonstrated an interest in foreign affairs (residence abroad or military experience helps), and didn't mind the eight-hour battery of psychological and aptitude exams and extensive security checks.

Entry-level salaries for the first year or more of training go from \$17,500 to \$27,500. Future pay raises, Mr. Smith said, "depend on the productivity of the individual."

"We're looking for people who are patriotic and are interested in the welfare of the country," he said. With so many people interested, the agency can be choosy. "We've very, very high standards. We're looking for the very best. We can't afford to be second-best."

He quoted a Chinese philosopher on the art of war. "The acme of skill is not winning 100 battles," he admonished. "It's finding security without having to win one battle." As the senior named Tim put it: "It just sounds like something fun to do."